

Guiding Tools for Instructional Problem Solving

Revised 2015

GTIPS-R



Print version adapted from the online manual at <http://www.florida-rti.org/gtips/index.html>

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	i
Guiding Principles: Meeting the Needs of All Students	1
Making Connections: Aligning Practices, Efforts, Commitments and Initiatives.....	11
Continuous Improvement: The Problem Solving Process.....	21
Team Engagement	33
Special Education Eligibility Decisions.....	38
Conclusion	49
The Tools	50
Common Understandings.....	51

Introduction

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports is a term used to describe an evidence based model of schooling that uses data-based problem solving to integrate academic and behavioral **instruction** and **intervention**. The integrated instruction and intervention is delivered to students in varying intensities (multiple **tiers**) based on student need. “Need driven” decision making seeks to ensure that district resources reach the appropriate students and schools at the appropriate levels to accelerate the performance of ALL students to achieve and/or exceed proficiency.

Many existing terms and initiatives share common elements of data-based problem solving to inform instruction and intervention (e.g., positive behavior support [PBS], problem solving/response to intervention [PS/RtI], Florida state standards-based **instruction**, **lesson study**, **continuous improvement** and differentiated accountability). For instance, teachers and administrators engage in standards-based instructional efforts with common **standards** for all through the implementation of the Florida State Standards. For this effort to be successful, it is important to recognize that students have varying needs and that correspondingly varying levels of support will be necessary for all students to master the standards. A multi-tiered system of supports provides the **framework** for organizing the **supports** that will ensure student success.

In order to make **instructional decisions** to implement the system of supports, the use of a structured, data-based problem solving process is critical to assure that each of the tiers is constructed in response to the specific needs of the students. This team-based process requires that school-based team members apply the following skills to facilitate the process:

1. accurately identify problems and goals; analyze **data**;
2. generate and validate hypotheses about why the students are not yet demonstrating the desired skill;
3. design, support, and implement academic interventions and behavioral supports; and
4. use **student centered data** to evaluate the response to instruction/intervention.

This team-based process applied at all levels of Florida’s educational system supports the mission of the State Board of Education. The mission of the State Board of Education, as stated in section 1008.31, Florida Statutes (F.S.), is to increase the proficiency of all students within one seamless, efficient system by providing them with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills through learning opportunities and research valued by students, parents, and communities. It strives to maintain an accountability system that measures student progress toward the following goals:

- highest student achievement
- seamless articulation and maximum access
- skilled workforce and economic development
- quality efficient services

Ultimately, the role of the education system is to prepare every student for life with a focus on college and career readiness. To this end, it is the position of the Florida Department of Education that a multi-tiered system of supports represents a logic and set of core beliefs, including the systematic use of a problem solving process that must be integrated seamlessly into educational initiatives throughout Florida. Ideally, this integration should be evident within continuous school improvement efforts, student progression plans, leader and **educator**

Guiding Tools for Instructional Problem Solving — Revised (GTIPS-R)

evaluation models, and the development of K–12 comprehensive reading plans to provide the legal structure for the implementation of a multi-tiered system in districts across the state.

Florida's Statewide Response to Instruction/Intervention Implementation (RtI) Plan was disseminated in 2008 and is still accessible at Florida's Multi-Tiered System of Supports website — <http://florida-rti.org/floridaMTSS/history.htm>. The plan outlines a **framework** for statewide implementation of problem solving and RtI through the establishment of an **infrastructure** that includes district-based leadership teams (DBLT) implementing district-based plans to support **school-based leadership teams (SBLT)** implementing school-based plans.

As stated in Florida's Statewide PS-RtI Plan (2008): "...all schools in Florida should ensure evidence based practices, instructionally **relevant assessments**, systematic problem-solving to meet all students' needs, data-based decision making, effective professional development, supportive leadership, and meaningful student and parent involvement. These are the foundation principles of an RtI system, which provides us the framework to elevate the efficacy of our statewide improvement efforts." Within the plan, RtI is defined as the practice of providing (1) high-quality instruction/intervention matched to student needs and (2) using learning rate over time and **level of performance** to (3) make important educational decisions.

It is imperative to consider specific types of educational decisions for students, such as eligibility for special education services, in the larger context of the multi-tiered system of supports implementation. More important than its role in making eligibility decisions, the **data** derived during the problem solving process are utilized to create and sustain **learning environments** that are effective and lead to desired outcomes for all students. Consequently, the multi-tiered system of supports outlined in this guide has a significant impact on **instruction** and assessment practices in Florida schools.

Ultimately, this guide provides Florida schools and districts with detailed information on the process for the collection of student performance data through the system-wide use of a data-based problem solving process and delineates how those data can be used to assist with making important educational decisions for all students.

About

The original version of this guide was released as a print-based manual in 2011. GTIPS-R represents updated terminology and an expansion of tools to reflect current federal and state research findings, policies, and guidance. The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) developed *The Guiding Tools for Instructional Problem Solving - Revised* (GTIPS-R) manual with the invaluable assistance of the writers, reviewers, and revisionists listed in the acknowledgements below.

The purpose of this guide is to assist districts and schools as they implement and support data-based decision making using a systematic planning and problem solving process at multiple levels of operation: school level, grade level (pre-kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, and high school), classroom level, student subgroup level, and individual student level.

This guide aligns directly with Florida's implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports using response to **instruction/intervention** data within a data-based problem solving process in every school. As well, the stage is set for schools to approach instructional decisions from a broader context of quality instruction, intervention, and **assessment** to address the learning and behavioral needs of all students.

Additionally, this guide addresses ways in which districts can assess the effectiveness of their core curricula and instruction, as well as interventions and, in turn, use such data in various decision making processes for students. Data reflecting the effectiveness of core instruction and interventions is used to make instructional decisions for all students, not just those who may be struggling. Therefore, it is important that district and school leadership teams take an active role in examining curricular materials, instructional methodologies, the learning environment, and other practices across school settings to determine their impact on academic and behavioral student learning.

The Florida Department of Education views a system comprised of multiple **tiers** of support as an avenue to continue to work collaboratively to significantly improve the way in which the needs of all students enrolled in Florida schools are addressed. In this way, students at all points on the continuum of educational need receive effective assistance. Accordingly, the Department looks forward to continuing unified efforts to support the implementation of a data-driven multi-tiered system across the state.

Acknowledgements

Original Contributors, 2011	Revision Contributors, 2015
George Batsche, Director Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project University of South Florida	George Batsche, Director Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project University of South Florida
Clark Dorman, Project Leader Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project University of South Florida	José Castillo, Unit Coordinator Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project University of South Florida
Heather Diamond, Specialist Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services Florida Department of Education	Clark Dorman, Project Leader Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project University of South Florida
Leah Kelly, Executive Director Student Support Services/ Exceptional Student Education Broward County School District	Heather Diamond, Coordinator Student Support Services Project University of South Florida
Kim Komisar, Program Director Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services Florida Department of Education	David Davis, Technology Project Coordinator Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project University of South Florida
Amelia VanName Larson, Supervisor Curriculum and Instructional Services Pasco County School District	Brian Gaunt, Inter-project Coordinator Positive Behavior Support Project Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project University of South Florida
Mary Alice Myers, Coordinator School Psychological Services Volusia County School District	Jayna Jenkins, MTSS Liaison Student Support Services Project University of South Florida
Mark Neely, School Psychologist Student Support Services Polk County School District	Zoe Mahoney, Specialist Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services Florida Department of Education
Teresa D. Sweet, Chief Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction Florida Department of Education	Kevin Smith, Director Just Read, Florida! Florida Department of Education
Melinda Webster, Elementary Reading Specialist Just Read, Florida! Office Florida Department of Education	Jeanne Wanzek, Assistant Professor College of Education Florida State University
David Wheeler, School Psychology Consultant Student Services Support Project University of South Florida	David Wheeler School Psychology Consultant Student Services Support Project University of South Florida

Note: Individuals are identified in the roles that they were fulfilling at the time the original and/or revised work was being completed.